



Washington State's February 19, 2008 Presidential Primary

On February 19, 2008, Washingtonians will play a role in nominating a candidate for this country's highest office. The 2008 Presidential Primary is a particularly rich opportunity. For the first time since 1952, the race for the White House is wide open, without an incumbent president or vice president on the campaign trail.

If, as expected by many analysts, the February 5 Super Primary narrows the fields to the top two or three candidates for each party, Washington's Presidential Primary could be pivotal in selecting party nominees. Candidates will blanket the Northwest in search of popular support.

Washington voters can observe presidential contenders in their own communities taking a stand on defining regional issues directly impacting the State of Washington such as the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, dams, international trade, the Bonneville Power Administration, national forests, as well as the military.

Washington's Presidential Primary allows Washington voters an important role in nominating candidates for the highest office in the land.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why does Washington have a Presidential Primary?

In 1988, more than 200,000 Washington voters signed an Initiative to the Legislature proposing that a Presidential Primary be held. The Legislature adopted the initiative in 1989, and it is authorized in Chapter [29A.56](#) of the Revised Code of Washington. The law states:

The...presidential nominating caucus system in Washington State is unnecessarily restrictive of voter participation in that it discriminates against the elderly, the infirm, women, the disabled, evening workers, and others who are unable to attend caucuses and therefore unable to fully participate in this most important quadrennial event that occurs in our democratic system of government.

The Legislature further emphasized that the presidential selection process must be more open and representative of the will of the people.

A Presidential Primary allows each Washington voter to participate in the nomination process, not just political party insiders who participate in the caucuses.

Q: What is the process for a presidential candidate to appear on the Presidential Primary ballot?

Only major political party candidates may appear on the Presidential Primary ballot. Candidates are placed on the ballot one of two ways:

- 1) By direction of the Secretary of State if the candidate is generally advocated, or is recognized in national news media. For the 2008 Presidential Primary, Secretary Reed released the preliminary list of candidates on November 13, 2007.
- 2) Candidates may also petition for a spot on the ballot with the support of at least 1,000 registered voters. Filings must be submitted no later than December 21, 2007.

Q: What difference will my vote make in the Presidential Primary?

Washington State is the second most populous state in the West. Every candidate for President seeks the prestige of winning a primary in a significant west coast state like Washington. National reports of Washington's primary impact the standing of each candidate.

In 2000, the four leading candidates for President campaigned hard in Washington State in hopes of capturing the momentum awarded the candidate who wins the Washington primary. Washington State primary winners George Bush and Al Gore campaigned aggressively in Washington State and went on to win their party's nominations. John McCain made three separate visits to Washington State, and Bill Bradley spent several weeks campaigning in Washington. All four of these candidates wanted to win in Washington State.

While appearing in Washington, these candidates took positions on important issues affecting this state's future. Washington voters could personally see and hear the candidates taking issues on critical Washington state issues.

Had Washington not held a presidential primary in 2000, the candidates may not have visited our state (other than for fundraising purposes) or taken positions on local issues. By participating in the Presidential Primary, each Washington voter plays an important role in nominating candidates for the next President of the United States.

Q: Can I participate in both the primary and a caucus?

Voters can participate in both the party caucuses and the Presidential Primary as long as they participate on behalf of the same party.

Both major parties plan to hold their caucuses on Saturday, February 9, 2008, ten days before the primary. The parties will invite voters to participate in the caucuses and will require participants to sign an oath declaring their party affiliation.

Voters participating in the Presidential Primary will be asked to sign an oath submitted by the political parties indicating that the voter has not participated in the other party's caucus process. Each party will receive a list of voters who chose to affiliate with that party in the primary.

Q: How will the political parties use the results of the Presidential Primary?

Political parties retain the authority to decide if they will use the Presidential Primary to allocate delegates to the national nominating conventions. The political parties may also use caucus results, or a combination of primary results and caucus results.

The Republican Party used the results of the primary to allocate all of the Washington delegates in 1992, half of its delegates in 1996, and one third of its delegates in 2000. The State Republican Party has decided that it will use the 2008 Presidential Primary to allocate 51% of its delegates. The remaining 49% of the delegates will be allocated based on caucus results.

The Democratic Party has never used the results of the primary to allocate delegates. The State Democratic Party will only use caucuses to allocate delegates in 2008.

Q: What do I have to do to participate?

Every registered voter may vote in the Presidential Primary. Depending on the county, just as in a regular primary, voters will either receive a consolidated ballot or separate party ballots.

Each voter must sign a one party oath, which will appear in the poll book for those voting at the polls, or on the envelope for those voting by mail.

The major parties drafted the oaths to which voters must attest. They are:

Republican: I declare that I am a member of the Republican party and I have not participated and will not participate in the 2008 precinct caucus or convention system of any other party.

Democrat: I declare that I consider myself to be a DEMOCRAT and I will not participate in the nomination process of any other political party for the 2008 Presidential election.

Q: What is the last day to register so I can vote in the Presidential Primary?

The last day to register is January 19, 2008. Voters who have not previously been registered to vote in Washington state may register in person in a County Auditor's Office until February 4, 2008.

Q: Will others know which party ballot I voted?

Each party will receive a list of voters who chose to vote in that party's Presidential Primary.